



MEDIA RELEASE  
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### **PLEA FOR SAFE SHOPPING AT LEVEL 3**

Retail NZ is asking the Government to allow safe shopping in-store when the nation moves to Alert Level 3 next week.

“The point of Alert Level 3 is that we are moving from only doing things classified as essential to doing things that can be done safely, and Retail NZ is confident that some physical shops can operate safely at Alert Level 3,” Retail NZ Chief Executive Greg Harford said today. “Not all goods can be sold practically online, so it is important that retailers have the option of opening their stores in order to meet customer needs.

“Health considerations are critical, and it is clearly necessary for shops to take precautions before they open. However, over the last four weeks, retailers including supermarkets, pharmacies, petrol stations and convenience stores have shown that it is possible for customers to shop safely, when they have been allowed inside physical stores. Retailers in these segments have made a significant investment in managing risks associated with COVID-19, and customers have appreciated that they have been able to make purchases from the stores.

“Given that COVID-19 risks have been successfully mitigated in stores classified as essential, it logically follows that they can also be managed in other stores. Retail NZ is in no way suggesting that shopping can return to normal in the short-term, but retailers with a bricks and mortar presence have demonstrated proactive, responsible and sensible steps to mitigate risks in order to open their doors to customers on a limited basis, and other retailers should be able to open if they can meet the same health and safety requirements. For example, outstanding hygiene practices, managing numbers in-store, enforcing social distancing in-store, the provision of gloves, the installation of screens at checkouts, and the use of contactless payment systems are all practical steps that can help deliver a safe shopping environment.

“Many retail stores operate from very large footprint sites, and these often have a very low customer density at any one time. Many furniture stores, for example, operate over several hundred square metres, but may only have a few customers in-store at once. Hardware and homeware shops are typically very large, and will usually have fewer customers per square metre than a supermarket. Garden centres and car yards also operate on very large sites, and are typically outdoor - further minimising the risk of spreading the virus.

“The retail sector is large, and turns over \$97 billion a year. Around 27,000 retail businesses operate from some 35,000 sites, and employ approximately 215,000 New Zealanders. Our sector is a big part of the economy, and because it is focused on servicing domestic consumption needs, it is well-placed to support the reboot of the economy. Not all stores will be able and willing to open at Level 3, but they should have the ability to do so, if it makes sense, and can be done safely.

“Retail NZ hopes that the Government will be reconsidering its decision not to allow physical shops to open at Alert Level 3.”

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